

Department of Human Services

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Articles in Today's Clips Friday, January 11, 2008

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WAYNE COUNTY

Murder case jury goes on a tour

10 minutes spent at Canton home

January 11, 2008

By CECIL ANGEL

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A Wayne County jury spent about 10 minutes Thursday inside the Canton home of Carol Ann Poole, on trial in the death of her 2-year-old foster daughter, Allison Newman.

Two white vans transporting the circuit court jury pulled into the Wood Tree subdivision at Haggerty and Michigan at 2:39 p.m. and parked single file in the driveway of the home on Emily Court.

Advertisement

The jury visited the two-story red brick home to view three areas Poole referred to in statements to police regarding how the child died Sept. 22, 2006.

The jury was to view the child's bedroom, the upstairs bathrooms and a stair bannister.

Wayne County Sheriff's Office deputies blocked Emily Court and prevented entrance to the street while the jury was present.

Poole, 42, is charged with felony murder, involuntary manslaughter and first-degree child abuse. If convicted of murder, Poole could be sentenced to life in prison.

Earlier Thursday, the jury heard testimony from Kay Smith, a social worker and friend of Alan and Carol Ann Poole.

Smith, who first cared for Allison as a foster mother, testified that Carol Ann Poole left a phone message for her early Sept. 22 that something was wrong with Allison. Smith said she drove to the home after she couldn't reach Poole by phone.

Smith testified that Poole appeared to her to be in shock because she seemed calm despite the toddler's injuries.

"I guess if it had been my baby I would have been hysterical," Smith said.

She said that prior to the girl's death, she at times had noticed Allison had scratches and bruises on her, but thought them to be normal childhood injuries.

Testimony is to resume Monday in Judge Ulysses Boykin's courtroom.

Contact **CECIL ANGEL** at 313-223-4531 or angel@freepress.com.

Man, 67, arraigned on sexual assault charges

January 9, 2008

By AMBER HUNT

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A 67-year-old man who was working as a mentor with a teenage boy has been arraigned on sexual assault charges, Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel said.

Robert Johannes of Macomb Township began working with the teenage boy in the summer.

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"The process turned from mentoring to sexual encounters," Hackel said. "The teen said he had engaged in sex acts with this man several times."

Johannes was charged last month with four counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct, a felony that carries a maximum penalty of life in prison. Authorities said the reason for the tough charge is two-fold: the sex act involved penetration, and Johannes was in a position of authority.

Had he not been a mentor, he would have been charged with third-degree criminal sexual conduct, a 15-year felony, Hackel said.

Johannes worked with the teen through a mentoring program run by the Michigan State University Extension Office, Hackel said. Johannes has no prior criminal record that would have shown up on a background check, the sheriff said; he's since been removed from the mentoring program.

The teen's story came out after he landed in the county's Juvenile Justice Center. Hackel said he didn't know what run-in with authorities the teen had to end up in the youth home.

However, while there, the teen told a counselor about the sexual assault.

"That's when it turned into a criminal matter," Hackel said.

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What's New

The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative

Youth Testify On Capitol Hill as Researchers Present New Findings on Aging Out



On Dec. 12, J.J. Hitch and Priscilla Davis, young adults who aged out of foster care in Michigan and San Diego respectively, testified about their "aging out" experiences during a briefing on Capitol Hill. Researchers from Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago presented their findings from a longitudinal study of young adults who aged out of care in Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin. The study shows that youth who are allowed to remain in foster care past age 18 are more likely to go to college. Extending care to age 21 might also increase earnings and delay pregnancy, according to the study, which is the most comprehensive examination of youth leaving foster care since the passage of the 1999 Foster Care Independence Act, known as the Chafee Act. However, when compared to adolescents not in foster care, youth aging out of the child welfare system are faring poorly as a group. "It's hard when you don't have parents who love you," said Hitch. "It sets us back. There are several things that have helped me succeed. I'm crowd surfing on my support system because I'm not strong enough myself." To learn more about the study, please visit

www.chapinhall.org

What's New
Spotlight Feature

From Pies to Paper Angels, Youth in Initiative Sites Create New Holiday Traditions

by Martha Shirk



The winter holidays can be depressing for youth in transition from foster care. The Hallmark card images of happy families gathered around brightly lighted Christmas trees contrast starkly with their memories of lonely holidays spent separated from their families.

To create some new holiday memories, youth with the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative sites have been busy since mid-November baking apple pies for a community feast, organizing toiletry drives for youth in residential facilities, and celebrating their relationships with each other at festive holiday parties.

The youth board of the Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative (MYOI) in Traverse City, Mich., kicked off the season of giving by getting together at the Grand Traverse Pie Co. in mid-November to make almost 100 apple crumb pies for a Thanksgiving dinner for more than 350 needy people in the community.



The idea of getting site participants to help make pies came from Denise Busley, who owns the pie company with her husband. The Busleys have been enthusiastic community partners since the Traverse City site's start. They allow the youth board to meet in the restaurant and also give the site a nickel for each piece of pie they sell, which adds up to about \$1,300 a year. They expect to pass along another \$1,200 for site expenses this year from customers' donations of their loose change.

"We've supported this Thanksgiving event since we opened 11 years ago, and this year, I thought, why not get the youth involved?" said Denise Busley. "I think that it's through giving that you learn to receive. If we can plug these youth into the community in a way that lets them know that people care about them, it's all for the good."

About two dozen youth helped with the pies. "It was nice to be able to help people who have less than I do," said Kayla Abel, 20, of Grawn, Mich. "This was the first time I've done something like this."

In early December, the Traverse City youth board turned its attention to helping with the annual "Paper Angels" gift project for children in foster care sponsored by WTCM Radio and Child & Family Services of Northwestern Michigan. This year, for the first time, MYOI youth were invited to submit wish lists that community donors could fulfill. "It's amazing how basic their needs are," said Marco Dedenbach, the site's community coordinator. "They didn't ask for luxury items. They asked for diapers, baby clothes, gift certificates for groceries — things they need to live day to day." The MYOI youth also volunteered to help out with the distribution of gifts to children in foster care, which took place on December 8.

The high point of the site's seasonal festivities is its annual holiday gathering, at Mountain Jacks restaurant on December 16. "We will be celebrating our youth's achievements and recognizing our community partners for all the support they provide," Dedenbach said. He has solicited

donations from the community to ensure that each youth receives a gift bag as well as the opportunity to win a bigger-ticket item, like a down comforter, in a raffle.

Elsewhere in the Jim Casey network:

In southern Michigan, the youth board for Macomb County MYOI hosted its annual holiday party at Andiamo's, an Italian restaurant, on December 18. Katherine Marceau, the site coordinator, noted that Christmas was a difficult time of year for many youth who have been in foster care. "They don't necessarily say anything, but I can tell it's hard on them," she said. "I can think of three or four who really struggle this time of year. They feel alone."

The site's holiday dinner was held at the same restaurant last year, and two of the waitresses purchased a blanket and candy for every youth who attended. The waitresses were so touched by the youths that they asked Marceau after the event if there was anything else they could do. She gave them the name of a youth board member whom she knew was unlikely to get any Christmas gifts. "They bought her all sorts of gifts," Marceau recalled. "They really spoiled her."

Marceau tries to make sure that every youth board member has a place to go on Christmas Day. "If they don't have family, I'll ask if they have a friend they can spend the day with, to kind of get them thinking out of the box. I try to put myself in their shoes. I wouldn't want to go to a stranger's home."

To commemorate Thanksgiving, the Macomb County youth board hosted a special dinner. "The majority had families to go to on Thanksgiving Day, but I wanted them to experience Thanksgiving with this family, too," Marceau said. "They're very close to each other."

In Bridgeport, Conn., the youth board, which is called A Voice to be Heard, voted last month to "adopt" a family for the holidays. The board asked Beth Ann Jackson, the Jim Casey program manager, to help identify a needy family, and she told them about two site participants whose mother is seriously ill with AIDS. The board set aside \$200 to purchase gift cards for the family, plus a smaller amount to buy bus tokens. The board is also planning to solicit donations of Christmas gifts for youth in three group homes, including one for teen moms and their children, and to help serve a meal at a local shelter.



The MYOI Youth Board in

Detroit hosted a Thanksgiving dinner at HockeyTown Cafe on November 20 for 127 14- to 24-year-olds who are in or transitioned from foster care. "Many of our youth do not have families or relatives to celebrate Thanksgiving with," noted Mary O. Macias, director of community partners for the site. "We provided a traditional Thanksgiving meal, an award presentation for youth who are aging out of the initiative, and a local hip-hop group for entertainment. We also had a great raffle that included: furniture, a microwave, an iPod, dinner certificates and a Detroit Tigers jersey."

In mid-December, the site will hold a Holiday Giveback event to benefit youth in residential facilities. "Our community partners have been holding hygiene product drives, collecting deodorant and shampoo and things like that," Macias said. "Our youth are going to come together for dinner and to put together care packages for about 100 youth who are in residential facilities."

In Denver, the Bridging the Gap youth leadership board sponsored a Thanksgiving dinner on November 17 at Rainbow Alley, a drop-in center for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth. Two community partners, Fado's Irish pub and Steubens Food Service, provided the food. "We had approximately 25 to 30 people come and enjoy turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, green bean casserole, and pumpkin and pecan pie," said Kippi Clausen, Jim Casey project director at Mile High United Way.

The Denver site is planning three other holiday-related events this month. On December 15, some youth baked cookies and carol at a local retirement center. On December 16, the three dozen Bridging the Gap youth who are parents received gifts for their children that were collected through a toy drive sponsored by a women's leadership group. And on December 29, the site will host a holiday dance.



01/11/2008

Looking out for those who need a helping hand

STACY LANGLEY , The Huron Daily Tribune

HURON COUNTY — It's not uncommon for family members to share physical traits or even personality traits, but for a local family there's one thing many of them have in common that connects them beyond having the same last name.

Some 30 years ago Marcia Langley and her husband, Walter, (who died in April) opened their hearts and Huron County home to welcome people from the community in need of an extra helping hand in life.

When starting their Adult Foster Care (AFC) home, licensed by the state, the couple realized they were devoting their lives to helping others. But what they didn't realize was their new found occupation and compassion for others was the beginning of what would become a common family thread.

In Michigan, no matter what the county, AFC homes can be licensed to care for 1 to 20 residents who live in a residential setting where the home owners provide 24-hours a day, seven days a week personal care and supervision for individuals who are developmentally disabled, mentally ill, physically handicapped or aged and cannot live alone but who do not need continuous nursing care.

Before AFC homes were established, individuals in need of care due to many sorts of mental or physical disabilities could live at home and get care from their family members or live in a state owned or county run institutional setting.

After a farming accident in the late '70s, Walt and Marcia opened their first AFC home near Port Austin. Marcia said when Walt was hurt in a silo unloader accident they began looking at other career options.

"We decided he couldn't do all the physical labor he had been doing, and we wanted to do something together," she said. "I loved it. We cared for such sweet people. I've got a lot of good memories of the people we cared for."

It wasn't until the 1980s that the couple's eldest son, Dennis, opened his own AFC home. Behind him followed the couple's son, Kirk. They all operated homes within just miles of each other. By the early '90s the couple's daughter Shelly opened a home in Tuscola County. And Walter and Marcia, too, made the move to Tuscola County and opened a new AFC home.

Eventually the couple's son Kevin would take over the Tuscola County home when Walt and Marcia moved to southern Michigan and opened their third AFC home there. Years after opening the AFC home in southern Michigan, the couple's youngest son Eric and wife, Tina, eventually took over Walt and Marcia's home allowing the couple to retire nearby.

"I loved doing what I did," said Marcia about the AFC home. "It's not an occupation for everyone. There's downfalls like any other job. Only when you have an AFC home it's a 24-hour a day job — you don't get to leave your job behind and go home. But I think it's the being tied down all the time, that is the hardest part at times."

As with any job, Marcia said there are many good things, too.

"There were a lot of joys that came along with the job. We got to know a lot of good people, and a lot of family members of our residents and we got to be very good friends with them over years," she said.

AFC homes are more than just a home for residents with mental and physical disabilities to stay. The AFC providers need to be able to offer assistance with bathing, grooming, dressing, eating, walking, toileting or the administration of any prescribed medications that are required by a physician.

An AFC family home is a state-licensed private residence and is subject to random inspections and scheduled state inspections by state officials.

For Walt and Marcia the couple's first AFC home was located on Stoddard Road near Port Austin, where they were licensed to care for six residents. Today it's owned by their son, Kirk, who continues to own and operate the home.

Just a few miles away on Tomlinson Road, Dennis Langley is licensed to care for six residents. And brother Kevin and his wife, Shelley, have a much larger AFC home on Richardson Road where they are licensed to care for 12 residents.

"The great thing about it is it's a home based business. Yeah, there's a lot of work involved. I cook for (a total of) 18 people, three times a day. We go through three boxes of cereal every day, and I do laundry all day long," Shelley said.

“We go through a washer and a dryer every year,” Kevin said. “The people who stay here — I call them my neighbors — they for the most part all had regular lives just like you and me, a husband or wife and kids, before something happened that they now need 24-hour a day care,” Shelley said. “Most of (the residents) still have their driver’s license.”

Before opening an AFC home Shelley said she worked at Huron Behavioral Health in Bad Axe for nine years and had experience understanding the needs of AFC residents.

“When Kevin brought the idea (of opening an AFC home) up to me I said OK because I thought I can cook, and I felt that I could do it better than anyone else,” she said. “It’s important to me that there are good homes in Huron County. But there’s a lot of sacrifices that go along with a job like this. And now days it’s a lot harder than it used to be.

“You can’t just hire someone you trust to watch the home because they have to have all the training (required by the state). Even though you just need someone to be there for an hour or two, you can’t do it. It’s not like finding someone to baby-sit your kids.” Both Kevin and Shelley said while it’s a lot of work, much of the time they find their job both rewarding and even fun.

“We have good times, laughing and joking with our neighbors,” Shelley said. “I don’t view them as anything other than a part of our big dysfunctional family. That’s what I tell everyone — I have one, big dysfunctional family.”

And while requirements for AFC homes have changed significantly over the years, there’s one thing the couple says has stayed the same.

“This isn’t a job that people do for money, because the pay is the same as it was 30 years ago and the requirements increase year after year,” Kevin said.

“You have to want to do this because you care about people,” Shelley said.

According the Michigan Department of Human Services, there are 32 open AFC Homes in Huron County.

Stacy Langley is the granddaughter of Marcia and Walter Langley. She has made journalism her chosen profession.

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MORNING SUN

Murder case may head to the jury today

By SUSAN FIELD
Clare Managing Editor

A Midland County man accused of murdering his ex-girlfriend allegedly told an undercover police officer that he wanted her daughter killed in a similar way to deflect suspicion from himself.

State police Detective Sgt. William Eberhardt testified Thursday that he met with Gordon D. Schultz in prison twice, with Schultz telling him during the second visit that he wanted Becky Sue MacDonald's daughter, Terrie Thrush, buried with her mother.

In its fourth day before Isabella County Trial Judge Mark Duthie, the case is expected to go to jurors today following closing arguments.

Eberhardt, who was working with the state police Major Crimes Division in Lansing in December 2006, told jurors that Schultz contacted him by telephone to set up a meeting, believing the undercover officer was a biker gang member and hit man.

Schultz got in touch with Eberhardt after a prison informant told authorities that he wanted Thrush dead because he believed she was prompting police to continue their investigation into MacDonald's Nov. 11, 2005 disappearance.

Eberhardt said Schultz called him a second time to make sure he received the prison visitation application, a hand drawn map to Thrush's home and a portion of the front page of the Nov. 15, 2006 Morning Sun that included an article about the investigation into MacDonald's disappearance and a photograph of Thrush at a press conference at the Isabella County Sheriff's Department.

First visiting Schultz at the Southern Michigan Correctional Facility Jan. 18, Eberhardt told jurors, Schultz said he wanted "the elimination of Terrie Thrush."

"He just wanted her gone, never to be found, to make it look similar to Becky's disappearance," Eberhardt said. "She kept the heat on him."

Eberhardt testified Thursday that Schultz agreed to pay \$700 for partial payment and that Schultz understood that he would be indebted to the biker gang when he was released from prison. where he was serving time for a domestic violence conviction in Midland County.

When Eberhardt told Schultz that he could "take care" of MacDonald's body, Schultz initially said no but called Eberhardt back to the prison for a second visit Jan. 22, saying that he reconsidered, Eberhardt testified.

When Eberhardt returned, Schultz gave him specific directions to the site in

the Au Sable State Forest so Eberhardt could "clean up" MacDonald's grave.

"He gave a very detailed description of how I was to get to the site, where it was located," Eberhardt testified.

Jurors also listened to lengthy audiotapes of Eberhardt's visits with Schultz in prison, reading transcripts as the audiotaped conversations were played.

During one conversation, Schultz told Eberhardt that if Thrush disappeared, "it's going to pull the task force off me, too."

At one point in the conversation, Eberhardt asked Schultz if he made "big" or "small" mistakes in burying MacDonald.

"Any mistake is a big mistake," Schultz replied.

Schultz told Eberhardt during the Jan. 22 visit that he could not afford hunters finding the grave or animals digging the body up, according to the tape.

At another point in the conversation, Eberhardt asked Schultz if he "torched" MacDonald's body in an attempt to eliminate evidence.

"Did you bury her when she was still on fire?" Eberhardt asked.

"I had to," Schultz replied. "There was a car coming."

In earlier testimony Thursday, Schultz's former cell mate, James Carter, took the stand and described how he helped authorities in the case.

Carter, who is now on parole after serving time for a second-degree home invasion conviction, was a confidential informant in prison, testified that Schultz said Thrush "kept pushing this case."

"He was going to take her out," Carter said.

Carter told Schultz his brother could do the job, then worked with prison officials to thwart Schultz.

"Basically, I was trying to stop it from happening," Carter testified.

Carter also testified that Schultz said he had to "take out" MacDonald because she was going to testify against him in a domestic violence case.

"He said if he'd done it a long time ago, he wouldn't be in prison," Carter said.

Ultimately, Schultz was convicted of third-offense domestic violence because transcripts of MacDonald's testimony at a previous hearing were used at trial.

During questioning from defense attorney Gordon Bloem, Carter denied that he was given preferential treatment or early parole because he helped in the case.

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MORNING SUN

Acquaintance says accused man admitted murder

By SUSAN FIELD
Clare Managing Editor

A Midland County man accused of killing his ex-girlfriend admitted to her slaying and burial, an acquaintance said Wednesday.

Robert Mott told jurors in Gordon D. Schultz's trial in Isabella County Trial Judge Mark Duthie's courtroom that Schultz said "I killed my old lady and buried her" when asked by Mott why he was in the Midland County Jail in 2006.

Becky Sue MacDonald, 42, of Fremont Township disappeared Nov. 11, 2005, weeks after testifying against Schultz in a domestic violence hearing in Midland County.

Mott, who was a trusty at the jail serving time for a drunken driving conviction, told jurors that a letter Schultz sent him later prompted him to go to police with the alleged confession.

Mott testified Wednesday that he met Schultz in rehab about 15 years ago and that the two kept in touch sporadically over the years, with Mott sometimes offering Schultz odd jobs.

Mott's testimony Wednesday differed from what he said during an earlier hearing, where he said that he was unsure if Schultz admitted to killing MacDonald or if he actually said "they said I killed my old lady and buried her."

When questioned about the differing testimony by defense attorney Gordon Bloem, Mott agreed that he said he was unsure but that he did so because Bloem was "doing his job."

"Actually, I think you construed it that way, sir," Mott said. "I think you did your job as a defense attorney and tried to put doubt in my mind."

Earlier in the day, jurors watched a DVD of police interviewing Schultz at the state police post in Jackson Jan. 24 -- the day after MacDonald's body was found in a remote area in Midland County's Edenville Township.

Isabella County Sheriff's detective Sgts. David Patterson and Dan Denslow met with Schultz, who was serving time at the Southern Michigan Correctional Facility in Jackson for a third-offense domestic violence conviction in Midland County, to confront him about finding the body.

During the interview, Patterson told Schultz that he led them to the grave because the gang member he allegedly hired to kill MacDonald's daughter, Terrie Thrush, was actually an undercover police officer.

Schultz showed little emotion when Patterson and Denslow questioned him about finding MacDonald's body, at one point asking the officers, "What do you want from me?"

At another point, Schultz denied killing MacDonald and, seconds later, said "no" when Denslow asked if police should be "looking at someone else."

In earlier testimony Wednesday, two forensic pathologists testified that MacDonald was murdered.

While Joyce DeJong of Sparrow Hospital in Lansing said MacDonald's cause of death could not be determined, a consulting pathologist, Kanu Virani, told jurors that MacDonald was asphyxiated.

DeJong, who performed MacDonald's Jan. 25 autopsy, said that, while she ruled the manner of death homicide, she could not pinpoint the cause.

DeJong testified that MacDonald's likely cause of death was asphyxiation.

Virani, who was hired as a consultant by Midland County Assistant Prosecutor Michael Walsh, went a step further.

Virani testified that he concluded after reviewing DeJong's autopsy report and photographs that large bruises on MacDonald's back suggested heavy pressure on her back could have caused suffocation.

Both DeJong and Virani told jurors that MacDonald's body was too decomposed to find small injuries and that there were no indications of injury on other parts of her body.

When asked by Bloem if MacDonald's death could have been natural – he suggested the possibility of a stroke – DeJong testified that stroke victims don't typically die immediately.

Bloem also asked if MacDonald could have asphyxiated on a substance she took herself.

DeJong said toxicology tests indicated MacDonald had a small amount of acetaminophen in her system and that tests to weed out every substance that may have been in her body would be extremely expensive.

Testimony is scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. today. Among the prosecution witnesses is William Eberhardt, the state police detective sergeant who posed as "Willie Boone," the hit man Schultz allegedly hired to silence Thrush.

Investigators allege that Schultz wanted Thrush dead because he believed she was behind the continued investigation into MacDonald's disappearance.

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Friday, January 11, 2008

Man charged with assault in stillbirth

Police say he kicked girlfriend in abdomen when she told him she didn't get an abortion.

Christine Ferretti / The Detroit News

WESTLAND -- A 24-year-old college student who police claim was upset his girlfriend wouldn't get an abortion faces life in prison on charges he killed her unborn child by beating her.

Police allege Daniel Jarrett II of Wayne threw the 19-year-old to the ground and kicked her in the abdomen after she told him she didn't end the pregnancy.

The Texas woman, who was five months pregnant, lost her child 48 hours later.

Police said Jarrett turned himself in three days after the Jan. 3 incident and was charged in 18th District Court on Wednesday with assault of a pregnant woman causing a miscarriage/stillbirth.

"That's not my nephew. He's never in trouble. He's not that type of child," said Georgetta Jarrett, 42, of Detroit.

Westland Police Sgt. Michael Harhold said the beating occurred at Woodland Villa apartment complex near Warren and Newburgh roads in front of a few mutual friends. The woman was treated at St. Mary Mercy in Livonia, where doctors discovered the fetus had no heartbeat.

Labor was induced, and the 21-week-old was delivered stillborn.

Both attend college in Texas. Jarrett remains jailed on a \$50,000 bond. A preliminary hearing is set for Thursday.

Find this article at:

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Published January 11, 2008

Wayne man charged with assault that caused girlfriend's stillbirth

Morning update

Associated Press

WESTLAND, Mich. - A 24-year-old college student faces life in prison on charges of killing his girlfriend's unborn child by beating her.

Westland police allege Daniel Jarrett II of Wayne threw the 19-year-old to the ground several times and kicked her in the abdomen after she told him she didn't get an abortion.

The Detroit News and WDIV-TV report Jarrett turned himself in three days after the January 3 incident.

The Texas woman was five months' pregnant. Labor was induced after doctors discovered the fetus had no heartbeat, and the 21-week-old was delivered stillborn.

Police didn't reveal the gender.

Jarrett is charged with assault of a pregnant woman causing a miscarriage/stillbirth.

A preliminary hearing is set for Thursday.

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The Milan News-Leader

Helping hand

Christmas Basket Program a success

By Brian Cox
, Staff Writer

Thirty-four Milan families had a brighter holiday season in light of the success of the Milan Rotary Club's first Christmas Basket Program, which distributed from three to seven boxes of food to each family.

Milan Rotary President Bryan Girbach credited the success of the program to a wide community effort.

"While Rotary members and high school students packed the boxes, the program was a success because of everyone who helped rekindle the previous Civitan project," Girbach said.

The Christmas basket project was traditionally organized by Milan's Civitan Club, which disbanded last year.

After a year hiatus, the program was revived by Milan Rotary Club.

Each school in the Milan Area School District held a food drive to support the program. Paddock and Symons each ran building-wide food drives. The middle school had a staff food drive, as well as a student project sponsored by the Six Pillar Club.

At the high school, Chase McGettigan and Drew Allum made the can food drive their senior project. In addition, the administrative team and Milan school board also contributed food to the program.

Aid in Milan helped qualify the families and provided the Rotary Club with a list of people who needed support.

"Nina Pemberton contributed a great deal of time and effort to help make the first annual Christmas Basket Program a huge success," Girbach said of Aid in Milan's director. "She contacted families, sent letters and coordinated the entire development of those who would receive support."

The Rotary Club raised in excess of \$2,300 from more than 40 area businesses to supplement the food collected by Milan students.

Staff Writer Brian Cox can be reached at 429-7380 or bcox@heritage.com.

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The County Press

Homeless man suspect in attempted break-in of house

by SUSAN YOUNGER
staff reporter

Police suspect a homeless man terrified a single mother while trying to bust into her Lapeer home.

John Franklin Gethicker, 24, formerly of Burton, remained in jail at press time Tuesday. He is facing charges of home invasion first degree and habitual offender second offense.

The victim, whose name is not being released, woke from her sleep and discovered a man she didn't know trying to break inside her home about 3 a.m. Dec. 30.

"My two dogs woke me up," she said. "I looked out my window, and he was on my front porch, busting into the front door."

Only a thin chain and a table protected her from the man who was screaming at her to let him in.

"I had a Christmas party the night before, and I cleared everything and happened to put the coffee table in front of the door," she said. "It was so scary. He was running his shoulder into the door and he wouldn't stop. I kept trying to shut it and he wouldn't stop."

During the ordeal, the victim was most frightened for her school age children who were sleeping in their bedrooms.

"All I could think about was them," she said. "I didn't know what would happen if he made it inside. I told him I was going to call 9-1-1, and he said, 'go ahead and call them.'"

The 9-1-1 dispatcher remained on the line with the victim until police arrived at her home in minutes.

"It was an awesome response," she said. "They were there in minutes. Sgt. Bill Stokes and police officer Trevor Johnson were there from Lapeer, and deputy Nick VanDenBerg and deputy Matt Snay came for the Sheriff's Department."

Gethicker was arrested. He was in jail at press time Tuesday, unable to post the \$100,000 10% bond requested by Lapeer County Prosecutor's Director of Victim Services Cathy Strong.

"It appears he is homeless and the fear is that he will break into another home," Strong said. "He has prior felonies and is a danger to the community."

The victim's door has been replaced, but feelings of safety haven't been restored.

"He almost made it in," she said. "It was really scary."

Susan Younger may be reached at (810) 664-0811, Ext. 8122 or susan.younger@lapeergroup.com

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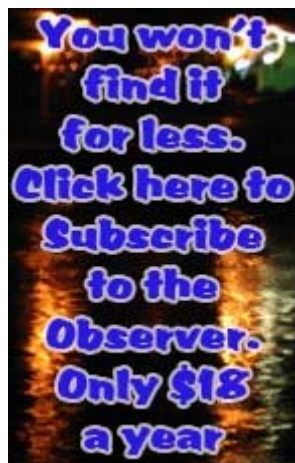
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Volunteers are needed to help with homeless event on Jan. 29

The Macomb County Homeless Coalition and Macomb County Continuum of Care are looking for volunteers to assist at a Community Connection Day for the homeless.

The community connection day will serve as a way to assist local homeless people with obtaining housing and services. Numerous organizations will be on hand to take applications and provide services. Volunteers will be needed to ensure the homeless get all the services available, as well as prepare and serve lunch. Professionals willing to volunteer their services are also encouraged to take part.

Services offered at the event will include:

- * Food
- * Personal care (haircuts, personal care supplies and clothing)
- * Health screenings (blood pressure, glucose, etc.)
- * Mental health screenings
- * General benefits counseling (Department of Human Services, Social Security, etc.)
- * Legal services
- * Employment services (job referrals, employment counseling)
- * Housing and shelter information
- * A children's area
- * Activities and entertainment

The Community Connection Day will be 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 29, at Trinity Lutheran Church, 45160 Van Dyke in Utica.

The January 2007 "Point-in-Time Count" recorded a total of 1,142 homeless people in Macomb County.

For more information or to volunteer, call Lynn Hosking at (586) 263-8498.

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Article published Jan 11, 2008

CRIES FOR HELP UP 24%

Robert Warner

The Enquirer

The sting of a worsening economy shows up like a red welt in the 24-percent increase last year in calls for help through Calhoun County's 211 assistance center.

Nearly one-in-10 of the record 34,524 callers said they needed money to help pay their natural gas bill. Another 3,178 were seeking food. And nearly 1,000 needed clothing.

"That's what you always see with basic needs in the community," said Kari Marciniak, program director for the Volunteer Center of Battle Creek and 211 coordinator. "You pay your immediate stuff first and then you figure out a way to cover the rest of it. It's definitely a crunch."

Marciniak said while the demand for clothing rose 24 percent for the year, hardly anyone went without their clothing needs being met. That's largely because of the Charitable Union, where free clothing has been distributed for more than 120 years.

"We definitely have something to do with it," said Patti Staib, director of operations at the Charitable Union.

The agency distributes more than a third of a million articles of clothing per year.

Maureen Rose, who has two daughters, ages 20 and 9, picked out snow boots, a hat and gloves for her younger daughter and pants, shirts and work uniforms for herself at the Charitable Union on Thursday.

"I work 30 hours a week, sometimes more, and I still can't make it without help," Rose said.

"I've shopped there for at least 10 years," she said. "It's the only way I can afford to get kids' clothes."

Marciniak said one of the eye-opening discoveries she made in analyzing 2006 caller data — and a pattern she believes continued in 2007 — was a quarter of all callers had income from employment but still needed assistance.

The Michigan League for Human Services reported in December that more than half of Michigan renters were paying at least 30 percent of their income on rent and utilities; only 40 percent were paying that much five years earlier. And the state was fourth nationally in mortgage foreclosures and sixth in personal bankruptcies in 2007, the organization reported.

Marciniak said some specific areas always show up when she catalogs the unmet needs of callers.

"Telephone bills, automotive bills, automotive repair — not seemingly as necessary, but how do you get to work if you can't drive, or how do you call in sick if you don't have a phone?" Marciniak said. "It seems obvious: You probably need a car and you probably need a phone if you're going to be in the workplace, but there's no funds for that."

And, she wondered aloud, "How do we expect as a community to turn our community around and make it more self-sufficient and less impoverished if we can't a) create jobs for people and b) get people to those jobs?"

So what can anyone do about it?

"Ideally we'd love everyone to call 211 and give, either resources to an agency or to the Volunteer Center, or volunteer time," Marciniak said.

"It's amazing what these agencies can do with volunteer power. They can do crazy things because it frees up staff to do other things that they may not have time to do."

Robert Warner can be reached at 966-0674 or rwarners@battlecreekenquirer.com.

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COTS collecting coats for needy

Forestry Club collecting blankets, too, through Jan. 25

By Catherine Kavanaugh
Daily Tribune Staff Writer

ROYAL OAK - The owners of Strictly Varsity have been storing old stock high school coats for months waiting for someone to have a coat drive.

Their wait ended Thursday when the Girls Forestry Club at Royal Oak Middle School launched a coat and blanket drive for COTS, formerly known as the Coalition on Temporary Shelter, Detroit.

Business owners Jim Slater and Sherryl Handren happily turned over a big box of about a dozen wool, leather and lined nylon coats worth \$65-\$175 each to club members.

"I saw the coat drive on the blinking marquee in front of the school and called right away," Slater said.

Club members will be by the marquee before and after school collecting coats from the community through Jan. 25. The school is located at 709 N. Washington. Donors can also drop off new or gently used and cleaned coats at a box by the main office.

"I'll hit up my neighbors and family for hats and mittens, too," said seventh-grader Ellen Stachowicz.

The club members enjoy the great outdoors but they said they also realize not everyone has a place to go back home.

COTS provides shelter, meals and services to homeless people of all ages. The agency has 140 beds and operates at full capacity all year.

ROMS teachers Debbie Taylor and Kerri Derminer started the club to give students a chance to go on fun after-school activities and help others.

"I think social activities and service projects are a good hybrid," said Derminer, a 1990 graduate of Dondero High School and former member of its Forestry Club.

For more information about the coat and blanket drive, call ROMS at (248) 541-7100.

Contact Catherine Kavanaugh at cathy.kavanaugh@dailytribune.com or (248) 591-2504.

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Students help needy keep warm

By Rene Cizio
 , The News-Herald

MELVINDALE — High school students warmed the hearts and bodies of those in need this holiday season. They made 60 blankets to donate to Oakwood Hospital & Medical Center in Dearborn as a way to "Spread the Love."

Twenty-three students from the Positive Peer Involvement class at Melvindale High School took on the project.

Positive Peer Involvement is a class for seniors that focuses on community service and helping others.

The class meets once a week during the last hour of the day, but little of the students' time is spent in the classroom.

They often go to other schools and mentor younger children, visit senior centers and bake goodies for public safety officials.

"They have to be good kids in order to be in the class," teacher Margaret Leskowski said.

In addition to their class time, the students must also volunteer for community service two hours a week.

Leskowski said the students always are on the lookout for ways to help others, and that they feel they are making a positive difference in the lives of others.

"When they heard that the cardiac care unit needed blankets, the kids went to work," she said.

Leskowski hopes that the values instilled in the students will last a lifetime, and she believes they will.

"I always tell them it's the small things you do," she said. "After a while, they don't even think twice about the two hours they are spending."

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